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SUBJECT: A/S HOOK'S MEETINGS WITH CZECH AND JAPANESE AMBASSADORS TO UNESCO

Classified by Ambassador Louise V. Oliver for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Both the Japanese and Czech Ambassadors to UNESCO clearly signaled to A/S Hook their opposition to Egyptian Culture Minister Hosni's candidacy for UNESCO Director General. The Czech Ambassador pushed for opening the race to new candidates and stressed the need for a top-level communicator. Japan's Ambassador Yamamoto believed we must oppose Hosni, but stressed that Japan was reluctant to get out in front, fearful of being seen as a mouthpiece for the current DG Matsuura. He also said that he did not see any good candidates among those who have announced for the moment, and is skeptical that someone from the Middle East could replace the Egyptian. End summary.

12. (C) IO Assistant Secretary Brian Hook met separately with the Czech Ambassador to UNESCO, Petr Janyska and Japan's Ambassador to UNESCO, Tadamichi Yamamoto on 11 December 2008 in the U.S. Delegation's offices at UNESCO headquarters. DCM Stephen Engelken and Mission staffer David Ostroff, along with IO special assistant Erin McLinn were present.

Czech Views on UNESCO

13. (C) A/S Hook found both the Czech and Japanese preoccupied by the question of who should succeed UNESCO's current Director General Matsuura when Matsuura's term ends in autumn 2009. Czech Ambassador Janyska said we need someone who brings a higher level of visibility to UNESCO than Matsuura has done -- someone with greater communication skills who could help fortify the UNESCO "brand" in the future. Hook agreed that other UN agencies, notably, UNICEF, were particularly strong on the concept of branding and, as a result, were more effective in their fundraising efforts.

14. (C) The Czech added that he felt the new person should not be necessarily linked to a region, but that UNESCO needs a "big name", an international figure who is accustomed to meeting the press. When A/S Hook asked who might be a good candidate, Janyska said that he had asked Vaclav Havel twice, but he is not in good enough health to consider the job. Janyska threw out the name Bill Gates as the kind of person who could dramatically raise the bar at UNESCO.

15. (C) When Hook then asked Janyska if he had other ideas or if he could ask Havel if he could recommend someone, Janyska replied by saying that the race is open, even if the Arabs think they are the ones who have it sewn up for this go-around. Janyska said that the Egyptians are "pushing hard" for Hosni. Hook answered that we, in turn, need to push back.

16. (C) Janyska observed that Egypt would surely be lobbying hard ahead of the African Union summit (Jan 26 - Feb 3 in Addis Ababa). A/S Hook assured him that we will be urging African states to refrain from moving to an early endorsement of any candidate. Janyska agreed, and added that we need to avoid a North-South clash regarding the DG election. Janyska then added that it is important to make clear to the Egyptians that even if they field another candidate other than Hosni, they should not expect that they will be automatically supported.

Japanese Thoughts

¶17. (C) Japanese Ambassador Yamamoto was equally opposed to Hosni. Yamamoto said that the Japanese are working hard to be discreet, as they don't want their anti-Hosni position to become public knowledge. Yamamoto added that it is important that others don't think that Japan is "channeling" the views of DG Matsuura on the subject. He went on to say that Japan has been straight-forward with the U.S. and France, and that it shares our concerns. Ambassador Yamamoto said that it is important that Matsuura's reforms not be compromised, as it would be detrimental to the organization in terms of improving quality of life issues, adding that the Japanese would like to have UNESCO seen as a useful organization, even for developed countries.

¶18. (C) Yamamoto said that Japan isn't interested in having the next DG be selected based on region, but stressed that the quality and capacity of the person is key. The Japanese do not see anyone fitting the bill at the moment.

¶19. (C) A/S Hook told Yamamoto that if Egypt's President Mubarak is personally engaged regarding Hosni's candidature then we, too, must be "on the offensive". Hook emphasized that UNESCO's work and Matsuura's legacy must be protected, or we risk moving back to the "bad old days" of division and conflict. Hook then mentioned that he would be talking with the French later in the day to see if calls could be made to senior French officials in an effort to convince the French to "walk back" their pledge to support Hosni.

¶10. (C) Like his Czech colleague, Yamamoto raised the importance of stopping the African Union from endorsing Hosni during its January summit meeting. Hook agreed heartily, saying that we need to break consensus at the A.U. meeting, though it is also extremely important at the same time to work on identifying an alternative candidate that

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people can get behind. Yamamoto then said that we must give Egypt the option of switching candidates, as well, adding that he is, however, skeptical about finding a good candidate from the Middle East right now.

OLIVER